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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001183

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DEPT FOR AF/SPG AND DRL

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [ER](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: EASTERN SUDAN: OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN

REF: (A) KHARTOUM 780 (B) ASMARA 381 (C)KHARTOUM 952

Classified By: Charge D'Affairs C. Hume, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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¶1. (C) Summary. On May 16 representatives from the US, UN, Canada, Netherlands, Norway and Britain met to discuss the situation in East Sudan. The discussion centered on the next steps for peace talks between the Eastern Front and the GNU. The Dutch and Norwegian representatives reported that Yassir Arman, member of the government's negotiating team, said that the plans for Eastern Front-GNU negotiations have stalled as the Eritreans appear to be awaiting the outcome of the implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Alternatively there are internal disputes within the National Congress Party (NCP) about Eritrea mediating the talks, as some NCP members believe Eritrea continues to support the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in the East. The Eastern Front leadership has told the UN that the NCP has split the Eastern Front along inter-tribal lines. At the meeting UNMIS representatives requested an expanded mandate to monitor the increased tensions in the East after the withdrawal of the SPLM. End Summary.

#### A Slow Down in Talk Preparations

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¶2. (C) According to Yassir Arman, member of the GNU East preparatory team, there has been no further planning for GNU-Eastern Front negotiation because the Eritreans are waiting for the successful implementation of the DPA before planning for the negotiations. The Eritreans want to ensure that the DPA is implemented better than the CPA. (Note: In February 2006, GSE President Afewerki lectured First Vice President Salva Kiir on poor implementation of the CPA. End Note.) Another theory is that the Eritreans are waiting for the complete withdrawal of SPLM troops in the East before negotiations and the GNU is stalling the negotiations until after the Bashir-Kiir meeting scheduled for the end of May. There are also discussions within the NCP about whether Eritrea could mediate the Eastern Front-GNU negotiations as many suspect the Eritreans of supporting the JEM in Eastern Sudan, especially during the May 2 attack on a convoy 80km north of Kassala.

#### Eastern Front Divisions

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¶3. (C) In conversations with the leadership of the Eastern Front in Asmara, UN Political Officer, Judith Goetz reported that the leaders admitted that the National Congress Party (NCP) had succeeded in dividing the movement along inter-tribal lines and the Eastern Front now had no common vision. Despite the split, the leadership was reportedly frustrated that the negotiations had not begun and felt their time was wasted in Asmara. Some of the leaders have returned to Hamesh Koreib. The British reported that other leaders of

the Eastern Front have approached British NGO Concordis International for more training to prepare for the negotiations.

UN Needs Increased Mandate in the East  
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¶4. (C) Some UN representatives are requesting an increased mandate for UNMIS to monitor the situation in the East after the withdrawal of SPLM troops. The UN fears that once the SPLM completely withdraw from the area its original mandate in the area will end and the SAF and local militias will have free rein to abuse the population, especially those suspected of supporting the rebels.

¶5. (C) According to the UN Commander Prem Thapa in Kassala, the first SPLM troop withdrawal in April was difficult because the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) did not provide the requested amount of logistical support for the withdrawal. Despite this obstacle the withdrawal continued, but without sufficient administrative coordination. The next phase of SPLM withdrawal was scheduled for May 15. However, the vehicles are still returning from the South, and the next movement was pushed back to the end of May.

¶6. (C) Barbara Manzi, the Head of the UN-Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance in the East, (UN-OCHA) said that the East has become a "prison" for UN humanitarian aid workers. National Security is restricting workers to the main cities of Kassala, Port Sudan, and Showak, citing "insecurity" for their confinement. According to Manzi this confinement is hampering food distribution to the estimated 73,000 refugees in need of food assistance.

KHARTOUM 00001183 002 OF 002

¶7. (C) Comment: Post believes UNMIS needs an increased mandate to monitor the events after the withdrawal of SPLM troops from Hamesh Koreib. The area is a powder keg with SAF troops, local militias, the JEM and disgruntled youths. With the JEM disappointed in the DPA, there is an increased possibility that the JEM will increase its attacks in the East.

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